

1 TITLE OF THE INVENTION

2 [0001] Point-of-Sale Activation and Subsequent Registration of Products

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15 CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

16 [0010] This application is a non-provisional application corresponding to pending U.S.  
17 Provisional Patent Application No. 60/260,058, filed January 5, 2001, entitled Point of Sale  
18 Activation for Software and Metered Accounts, and claims priority benefit thereof.

19 STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR  
20 DEVELOPMENT

21 [0011] Not applicable.

22 REFERENCE TO COMPACT DISC(S)

23 [0012] Not applicable.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

**[0020]** 1. Field of the Invention: The present invention relates, in general, to methods and apparatus for point-of-sale activation of products such as, for example, software, downloaded music and other copyrighted material, metered accounts, and other products, and related packaging for presentation to a purchaser prior to sale and for point-of-sale activation of such products. In particular, the present invention relates to methods and apparatus for the point-of-sale activation of such products, related packaging for presentation to a purchaser prior to sale and for point-of-sale activation of such products, and the subsequent registration of the products so as to enable the products to be used by a consumer.

**[0030]** 2. Information Disclosure Statement: Prior art prepaid metered accounts associated with debit cards are well-known for providing access to goods and services, e.g., telephone services. Typically, a card having a personal identification number ("PIN") thereon is sold at a retail outlet for a certain price. This PIN is associated with an already-activated metered account that is pre-credited with a certain predetermined value representing the value of services, e.g., telephone services, being purchased. Then, as the cardholder uses the telephone services, the cardholder provides the PIN and the account is successively debited for the services provided until the value of the card is exhausted. Often, the predetermined value credited to the metered account may be more than the actual purchase price of the debit card because of promotional pricing, etc. However, theft of services is a problem when such a scheme is used because unfettered access to the metered account is available to anyone who obtains knowledge of the PIN for the pre-activated metered account, necessitating the storage of such cards under lock and key by the retail merchant until the moment the cards are sold, thereby preventing the stocking of such cards on store shelves freely accessible by prospective purchasers.

**[0040]** An excellent and innovative approach to solving such theft of services for a metered account is given by Fiala, U.S. Patent No. 5,918,909 (issued July 6, 1999), fully included herein by reference thereto, disclosing how innovative packaging and a related

1 method of use, in which a data-encoded activation strip on a card attached to a panel of a  
2 package, can permit a metered account to be activated at the point-of-sale, thereby allowing  
3 the packaged, but inactive, cards for the metered account to be placed on shelves of a retail  
4 store and removing the need for keeping such cards for metered accounts under lock and key  
5 prior to sale. Another example of solving such theft of services for a metered account is  
6 given by Smith *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 5,777,305 (issued July 7, 1998), fully included herein  
7 by reference thereto, disclosing that the data-encoded activation strip could be placed on the  
8 package itself rather than on the card, and also disclosing that a machine-readable  
9 identification number could be visible through a cutout in the package, so that either the data-  
10 encoded activation strip or the machine-readable identification number could be used to  
11 activate the metered account at the point-of-sale. However, the purpose of these prior art  
12 approaches, and of other improvements that have built upon these prior art approaches, was  
13 to provide point-of-sale activation of metered accounts, and the purpose of these prior art  
14 approaches and their improvements was completed after the point-of-sale activation of the  
15 metered account.

16 [0050] Some products, such as computer software, music, movies, entertainment  
17 products, telephone services, etc., are accessed and/or retrieved over well-known  
18 communications channels subsequent to purchase, such that all of, or a portion of, the  
19 products are delivered over the communications channel. Examples of such well-known  
20 communications channels are well-known dialup telephone voice or data connections,  
21 dedicated high-speed data channels, broadband cable transmission channels, radio and/or  
22 satellite communications channels, a packet-switched global data communications network  
23 (*i.e.*, the so-called "internet"), etc. Additionally, some products or services, such as computer  
24 software, etc., have to be "registered" with a registration database, during which registration  
25 step the user of such products provides a purchased code, such as a PIN or serialized  
26 registration code, to the registration facility and may receive an "unlocking code," etc., that  
27 permits use of the product or service by entering this unlocking code at the time of use of the

1 product.

2 [0060] Furthermore, some products, particularly computer software products, face a  
3 problem of rapid obsolescence of inventory as the products are improved, corrected, and/or  
4 updated, such that older versions of the products must be discarded or returned by retailers,  
5 often at great expense to the retailer or manufacturer.

6 [0070] It is therefore desirable to provide improved packaging and methods for  
7 automated activation at point-of-sale of products, and further to provide improved apparatus  
8 and methods for subsequent registration of those products after point-of-sale activation. It is  
9 further desirable to solve the problem of inventory obsolescence of rapidly evolving data  
10 products such as computer software.

11 [0080] None of the known prior art references, either singly or in combination, disclose  
12 or suggest the present invention.

### 13 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

14 [0200] The present invention provides packaging of products for presentation to a  
15 prospective purchaser, provides for point-of-sale activation of the products, provides for  
16 subsequent post-activation registration of the products, and provides methods and apparatus  
17 for accomplishing such point-of-sale activation and subsequent registration of the products.

18 [0210] With all embodiments of the invention, the product being vended is unactivated  
19 and cannot be used prior to activation at the point-of-sale. Many equivalent means of  
20 machine-readable activation at the point-of-purchase are disclosed such as a data-encoded  
21 activation strip that can be read by a magnetic or optical scanner, or such as well-known so-  
22 called integrated circuit card ("ICC") or "smart card" technology in which data within an  
23 integrated circuit is accessed at the point-of-purchase by a well-known ICC interface  
24 apparatus.

25 [0220] Prior to point-of-sale activation, and while the product to be vended is in the retail  
26 store for examination by a prospective purchaser, a personalized identification number

1 ("PIN") is preferably obscured from the view of the purchaser. The PIN may be human-  
2 readable alphanumeric characters and could be obscured, for example, by a well-known  
3 "scratch off" coating or "peel-off" label to provide evidence of a surreptitious attempt by  
4 another to view the PIN prior to purchase, or may be data that is only readable by a  
5 specialized machine such as a magnetic or optical scanner, or may be data that is encoded  
6 onto computer data storage media within the purchased package, or may be data that is  
7 encoded within an ICC element within the purchased package and readable only using a  
8 well-known ICC interface apparatus, or may be obscured simply by having the PIN hidden  
9 by or within the packaging itself. The PIN, even if visible, would not be usable until the  
10 product is activated at point-of-sale, but there would be a risk that the PIN, if visible, might  
11 be surreptitiously viewed and recorded prior to sale by someone desiring free use of the  
12 product, that this someone could simply wait until activation at point-of-sale by a *bona fide*  
13 purchaser, at which time the surreptitious viewer might be able to register and then use the  
14 product, possibly even preventing use of the product by the *bona fide* purchaser.  
15 Accordingly, it is very desirable that, prior to point-of-purchase activation, the PIN is  
16 obscured from viewing by a prospective purchaser so as to prevent surreptitious viewing and  
17 recording of the PIN by someone other than the eventual purchaser prior to purchase of the  
18 product by the eventual purchaser of the product. With some embodiments, vending and  
19 activation of the product occurs via a kiosk, which may perform a final manufacturing step of  
20 applying the PIN to the vended package at the time of sale.

21 [0230] Subsequent to point-of-sale activation, the method and apparatus of the present  
22 invention provide for registration of the purchased product/services with a registration  
23 database over a well-known communications channel, during which registration step the user  
24 of such products/services provides the PIN, and perhaps other related registration  
25 information, to the registration facility, thereby enabling the product/services to be utilized  
26 by the user. Optionally, the user may receive an "unlocking code," etc., for subsequent use at  
27 the time the product/service is accessed or used by the user, thereby permitting use of the

1 product or service, and, for some types of products/services, such as, for example, computer  
2 software products, updates or revisions, or perhaps even the entire product, are then  
3 downloaded over the communications channel (or perhaps even a different communications  
4 channel than the one used for registration). In some embodiments of the present invention,  
5 the registration and optional receipt of an unlocking code, as well as the optional  
6 downloading over the communications channel of updates or part or all of the product, may  
7 be automated, occurring at the first use of the product's computer data storage media without  
8 explicit request by the user.

9 **[0240]** It is an object of the present invention to provide packaging of products for  
10 presentation to a prospective purchaser, to provide for point-of-sale activation of the  
11 products, to provide for subsequent post-activation registration of the products in a secure  
12 manner, and to provide methods and apparatus for accomplishing such point-of-sale  
13 activation and subsequent registration of the products.

14 **[0250]** It is an additional object of the present invention to provide a method of  
15 manufacture for ensuring accurate association of a serialized product within a package with a  
16 point-of-sale activation code on the package.

17 **[0260]** It is still a further object of the present invention to provide post-purchase delivery  
18 of such products over a communications channel, with such delivery being co-ordinated and  
19 integrated from manufacture, through point-of-sale activation, and post-purchase registration.

20 It is a further object of the present invention to provide a solution for inventory obsolescence  
21 of rapidly evolving data products such as computer software.

## 22 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

23 **[1000]** Fig. 1 is a plan view of a first embodiment of the package of the present invention  
24 before final assembly.

25 **[1010]** Fig. 2 is a front view of the first embodiment of the package of the present  
26 invention after final assembly.

1 [1020] Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the package of the present  
2 invention of Fig. 1 during folding of the panels of the package together.

3 [1030] Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the package of the present  
4 invention of Fig. 1 after folding of the panels of the package together.

5 [1040] Fig. 5 is a rear view of the first embodiment of the package of the present  
6 invention after final assembly.

7 [1050] Fig. 6 is an enlarged view of a portion of Fig. 5 of the first embodiment of the  
8 package of the present invention, showing the URL designator.

9 [1060] Fig. 7 is a plan view of the joined panels of the package of the first embodiment  
10 of the present invention, similar to Fig. 1 but at an earlier stage in assembly.

11 [1070] Fig. 8 is a front view of the transparent window for the computer data storage  
12 media of the first embodiment of the package of the present invention.

13 [1080] Fig. 9 is a view of the computer data storage media of the first embodiment of the  
14 package of the present invention.

15 [1090] Fig. 10 is a view of the transparent window for a portion of the activation card for  
16 the first embodiment of the package of the present invention.

17 [1100] Fig. 11 is a front view of a first embodiment of an activation card of the present  
18 invention.

19 [1110] Fig. 12 is a rear view of the first embodiment of the activation card of the present  
20 invention.

21 [1120] Fig. 13 is an enlarged rear view of the first embodiment of the activation card of  
22 the present invention.

23 [1130] Fig. 14 is a perspective view of an instructional booklet for inclusion within  
24 packaging of various embodiments of the apparatus of the present invention.

25 [1140] Fig. 15 is a front view of a transparent window for the computer data storage  
26 media of the second embodiment of the package of the present invention.

27 [1150] Fig. 16 is a plan view of the joined panels of the package of the second

embodiment of the package of the present invention.

[1160] Fig. 17 is a view of the computer data storage media of the second embodiment of the package of the present invention.

[1170] Fig. 18 is a perspective view showing placement of an instructional booklet and computer data storage media into a box of the second embodiment of the package of the present invention.

[1180] Fig. 19 is a perspective view of the second embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1190] Fig. 20 is a perspective view of the second embodiment of the package of the present invention during folding of the panels of the package together.

[1200] Fig. 21 is a front view of the second embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1210] Fig. 22 is a rear view of the second embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1220] Fig. 23 is a plan view of a third embodiment of the package of the present invention before final assembly.

[1230] Fig. 24 is a perspective view of the third embodiment of the package of the present invention of Fig. 23 during folding of the panels of the package together.

[1240] Fig. 25 is a perspective view of the third embodiment of the package of the present invention of Fig. 23 after folding of the panels of the package together.

[1250] Fig. 26 is a front view of the third embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1260] Fig. 27 is a rear view of the third embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1270] Fig. 28 is a plan view of the joined panels of a fourth embodiment of the package of the present invention.

[1280] Fig. 29 is a front view of a second embodiment of an activation card of the present



invention.

[1290] Fig. 30 is a rear view of the second embodiment of the activation card of the present invention.

[1300] Fig. 31 is a plan view of the fourth embodiment of the package of the present invention before final assembly.

[1310] Fig. 32 is a rear view of the fourth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1320] Fig. 33 is a front view of a fifth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1330] Fig. 34 is a rear view of a fifth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1340] Fig. 35 is a front view of the sixth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly, whose rear view is shown in Fig. 46.

[1350] Fig. 36 is a plan view of an eighth embodiment of the package of the present invention before placement of the activation card in the package during assembly.

[1360] Fig. 37 is a front view of the transparent window for the computer data storage media of the eighth embodiment of the package of the present invention.

[1370] Fig. 38 is a view of the computer data storage media of the eighth embodiment of the package of the present invention.

[1380] Fig. 39 is a front view of a third embodiment of an activation card of the present invention.

[1390] Fig. 40 is a rear view of the third embodiment of the activation card of the present invention.

[1400] Fig. 41 is a perspective view of the eighth embodiment of the package of the present invention of Fig. 36 during folding of the panels of the package together.

[1410] Fig. 42 is a perspective view of the eighth embodiment of the package of the present invention of Fig. 36 after folding of the panels of the package together.

1 [1420] Fig. 43 is a front view of the eighth embodiment of the package of the present  
2 invention after final assembly.

3 [1430] Fig. 44 is a rear view of the eighth embodiment of the package of the present  
4 invention after final assembly.

5 [1440] Fig. 45 is a perspective view of a ninth embodiment of the package of the present  
6 invention with an activation code exposed through an aperture in the package, and with a  
7 portion of the package cut away to show an associated PIN inside the package along with  
8 computer data storage media.

9 [1450] Fig. 46 is a rear view of the sixth embodiment of the package of the present  
10 invention whose front view is shown in Fig. 35.

11 [1460] Fig. 47 is a rear view of a seventh embodiment of the package of the present  
12 invention. The front view of the seventh embodiment of the package of the present invention  
13 after final assembly is substantially the same as the front view of the sixth embodiment as  
14 shown in Fig. 35.

15 [1470] Fig. 48 is a plan view of a substrate of a first embodiment of a label as might be  
16 used with some embodiments of the present invention, during an early stage of manufacture  
17 of the label.

18 [1480] Fig. 49 is a plan view of the substrate of the first embodiment of the label of Fig.  
19 48 during a subsequent stage of manufacture after printing thereon of a PIN and a machine-  
20 readable optical activation code.

21 [1490] Fig. 50 is a plan view of the first embodiment of the label of Fig. 49 during a  
22 subsequent stage of manufacture after deposition thereon of an opaque covering over the  
23 PIN.

24 [1500] Fig. 50A is a plan view of a second embodiment of the label of Fig. 50,  
25 substantially similar thereto except that the machine-readable optical activation code is  
26 printed on top of the opaque covering over the PIN.

27 [1510] Fig. 51 is a plan view of the first embodiment of the label of Fig. 50 during

1 removal of the opaque covering over the PIN.

2 **[1520]** Fig. 51A is a side sectional view of the first and second embodiments of the labels  
3 of Figs. 50 and 50A as applied to a package of the present invention, in which a scratch-off  
4 opaque covering has been deposited over the PIN.

5 **[1530]** Fig. 51B is a side sectional view of a variation of the first and second  
6 embodiments of the labels of Figs. 50 and 50A as applied to a package of the present  
7 invention, in which a peel-off opaque covering has been deposited over the PIN and is being  
8 removed.

9 **[1540]** Fig. 52 is a plan view of a third embodiment of a label as might be used with  
10 some embodiments of the present invention, having multiple PINs and showing removal of  
11 the opaque covering over the multiple PINs.

12 **[1550]** Fig. 53 is a schematic block diagram showing various components of some  
13 embodiments of the method of the present invention.

14 **[1560]** Fig. 54 is a schematic block diagram showing various components of other  
15 embodiments of the method of the present invention.

16 **[1570]** Fig. 55 is a perspective view of a twelfth embodiment of the package of the  
17 present invention during folding of the panels of the package together.

18 **[1580]** Fig. 56 is a front view of a product registration card for use with the twelfth and  
19 thirteenth embodiments of the present invention.

20 **[1590]** Fig. 57 is a rear view of a product registration card for use with the twelfth and  
21 thirteenth embodiments of the present invention.

22 **[1600]** Fig. 58 is a front view of the transparent window for the multiple product  
23 registration cards of the twelfth and thirteenth embodiments of the package of the present  
24 invention.

25 **[1610]** Fig. 59 is a view of the transparent window for a portion of the activation card for  
26 the twelfth embodiment of the package of the present invention.

27 **[1620]** Fig. 60 is a front view of the twelfth embodiment of the package of the present

invention after final assembly.

[1630] Fig. 61 is a rear view of the twelfth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1640] Fig. 62 is a perspective view of an thirteenth embodiment of the package of the present invention during folding of the panels of the package together.

[1650] Fig. 63 is a front view of the thirteenth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1660] Fig. 64 is a rear view of the thirteenth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1670] Fig. 65 is a rear view of a fourteenth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1680] Fig. 66 is a front view of the fourteenth embodiment of the package of the present invention after final assembly.

[1690] Fig. 67 is a perspective view of the fourteenth embodiment of the package of the present invention, showing lifting of the protective flap during activation at point-of-sale.

[1700] Fig. 68 is a schematic block diagram showing various components of some embodiments of the method of the present invention in which the package is vended from a kiosk at the point-of-sale.

[1710] Fig. 69 is a schematic block diagram showing various components of the kiosk shown in Fig. 68.

[1720] Fig. 70 is a plan view of a gift box package (fifteenth embodiment) of the present invention, before folding assembly of the gift box package.

[1730] Fig. 71 is a perspective view of the gift box package of Fig. 70 during folding assembly of the package.

[1740] Fig. 72 is a perspective view of the gift box package of Fig. 70 after folding assembly of the package.

[1750] Fig. 73 is a perspective view of the gift box package of Fig. 70 after activation of

1 the product and with the activation card removed.

2 [1760] Fig. 74 is a perspective view of a tenth embodiment of the package of the present  
3 invention, similar to the ninth embodiment shown in Fig. 45, with a product serialization  
4 code exposed through an aperture in the package and with the label of Fig. 50 applied to the  
5 package, and with a portion of the package cut away to show serialized computer data storage  
6 media and other product materials inside the package.

7 [1770] Fig. 75 is a perspective view of an eleventh embodiment of the package of the  
8 present invention, similar to the ninth embodiment shown in Fig. 45 and the tenth  
9 embodiment shown in Fig. 74, with the label of Fig. 50 applied to the package, and with a  
10 portion of the package cut away to show unserialized computer data storage media and other  
11 product materials inside the package.

12 [1780] Fig. 76 is a diagram showing a portion of a manufacturing step of the present  
13 invention in which the activation code and product serialization information are scanned,  
14 become associated with each other, and are stored together in a computer database.

## 15 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

16 [2000] Referring to the drawing figures, various preferred embodiments of packaging of  
17 the present invention are shown, as well as various preferred methods of practicing the  
18 present invention using the preferred embodiments of packaging. Figs. 53, 54, and 68 show  
19 variations of the method of the present invention, and the method of the present invention  
20 will be described with only a brief description of the packaging variations used to practice the  
21 method of the present invention, followed by a detailed description of the various preferred  
22 embodiments of the packaging. It shall be understood that many aspects of all embodiments  
23 of the packaging of the present invention are substantially the same, and only the differences  
24 will be treated in detail, it being understood that similar structural features of the various  
25 embodiments perform similar functions. It should be further understood that variations of the  
26 present invention are possible in which some elements of one embodiment's packaging

1 structure are combined with other elements of another embodiment, as will be readily  
2 apparent to one skilled in the art after being presented with the disclosure and teachings of  
3 the present invention.

4 **[2010]** Referring to Figs. 53, 54, and 68, the method of the present invention provides for  
5 point of sale activation and subsequent registration of products. The products are able to be  
6 presented using a package, generally, **20**, in a retail environment in a “cold” or unactivated  
7 state and are then “activated” at the time of purchase at a point-of-sale (“POS”). It shall be  
8 understood that the terms point-of-sale and point-of-purchase may be used interchangeably  
9 herein. The packaged delivery system of the present invention allows a variety of goods and  
10 services, generically referred to herein as “products”, to be metered or activated after the  
11 product has been purchased. Products suited for this invention include, without limitation,  
12 computer software programs, computer software applications, digital information, access to  
13 digital information and programming content, “virtual reality” programs and services and  
14 games and entertainment, and internet services, all of which require license control or  
15 metered access, or where prepayment would benefit a supplier of these products.

16 **[2020]** It is well-known to purchase such products using credit cards and to deliver such  
17 products over a communications channel to a computer’s data storage peripherals. Many  
18 consumers are unwilling to provide confidential information, such as credit card account  
19 numbers or personal data, etc., to unknown organizations or merchants. The present  
20 invention offers a method of purchasing products with anonymity and without having  
21 established credit.

22 **[2030]** The product being vended or sold may be activated at the POS by various means.  
23 For example, some embodiments of the package have a data-encoded strip with an encoded  
24 activation code, and the activation code of the data-encoded strip is read by an appropriate  
25 and well-known data-encoded strip reader such as, for example, a well-known magnetic strip  
26 reader **22** sold under the trademark VeriFone, or a well-known optical scanner **24** that can  
27 read optical characters, bar codes, machine-readable optical recording media, etc., depending

1 on the particular variant of data-encoded strip. Preferably, the activation code may be read at  
2 POS without requiring the package to be torn, opened, or destroyed, because such  
3 modification of the package would preclude its return to stock in the event that the purchaser  
4 decides or is not able to complete the purchase of the product, but modification of the  
5 packaging during POS activation, while undesirable, is not precluded by some embodiments  
6 of the present invention. As used herein, a "data-encoded strip" shall be understood to mean  
7 any of the well-known technologies by which data may be encoded into machine-readable  
8 form, such as, for example, by magnetic flux reversals of magnetic media, bar codes,  
9 machine-readable optical characters, machine-readable optical recording media, etc. Other  
10 embodiments of the package utilize well-known integrated circuit card ("ICC") technology,  
11 also well-known in the trade as so-called "smart card" technology, as described, for example,  
12 by the well-known international specifications given in ISO/IEC 7816-3, ISO/IEC 7816-4,  
13 ISO/IEC 7816-5, etc., for intelligent payment card technology developed by the international  
14 consortium of Europay, MasterCard, and VISA ("EMV"). In such well-known ICC  
15 technology embodiments, an ICC element 26, such as an integrated circuit with random  
16 access memory ("RAM") or read-only memory ("ROM"), or both, is programmed with  
17 activation code and/or PIN information that can be interrogated, updated, etc., using a well-  
18 known ICC interface apparatus 28, and typically the ICC element 26 is embedded into a  
19 plastic card. In the context of the present invention, the ICC element may be embedded into  
20 an activation card, generally, 78, of the present invention.

21 **[2040]** All embodiments of the package 20 have at least one PIN, generally, 32,  
22 preferably obscured while the package is still in the retail environment for examination by a  
23 prospective purchaser, by which the activated product may be registered during a registration  
24 step subsequent to activation at POS. The various details of how the PIN may be included  
25 with each embodiment of the packaging of the present invention are described with each  
26 respective embodiment. The PIN may be alphanumeric data of any desired length, and  
27 represents one unique product account in the computer data storage apparatus 34 with which

1 the product is registered after activation. PINs can be produced in a well-known manner by a  
2 computer program in random order and of specified alphanumeric character lengths. As  
3 hereinafter explained, random PINs can have an associated sequential control number for the  
4 vended product, with the relationship and association between the PIN and the control  
5 number being established prior to vending of the product, such that the relationship and  
6 association may be stored in the computer data storage apparatus 34 prior to vending of the  
7 product. So as to enable a one-to-one mapping between the number of product accounts, i.e.,  
8 sequential control numbers, and the PINs, the PINs will be of an appropriate length to enable  
9 such unique encoding. Additionally, the PIN may be lengthened by adding additional  
10 alphanumeric characters (check codes) for additional levels of security. If desired, the  
11 control number may be encoded in the data-encoded strip or ICC element, etc., and this  
12 encoding of the control number may be used as an additional security check for the PIN.

13 [2050] For ease of use by a person registering the product, the PIN, if human readable,  
14 may have dashes or spaces interposed within the alphanumeric characters, such as, for  
15 example, 999-999-999 or 999 999 999.

16 [2060] As described in greater detail herein as the various embodiments are presented,  
17 the PIN or PINs may be obscured by panels of the package or by a removable opaque  
18 covering such as well-known scratch-off opaque material or peel-off opaque material, so as  
19 to provide an additional level of security by providing the customer with evidence of  
20 surreptitious viewing and/or tampering prior to purchase. If the obscuring material were to  
21 show evidence of tampering, the customer would realize that the PIN or PINs were no longer  
22 secure. The well-known opaque scratch-off material can be deposited over the PIN by heat  
23 and pressure using commonly-available hot stamping material, or could be printed in a slurry  
24 or screen-printed directly over the PIN so as to provide security. The opaque material may  
25 be overprinted with instructions to remove the obscuring material in order to access the PIN.  
26 A pressure-sensitive opaque label may be positioned over the PIN or PINs using an  
27 appropriate applicator in an automated machine process at high speeds. An opaque pressure-



1 sensitive permanent-adhesive label, cut or scored to allow evidence of tampering, could be  
2 used to secure and conceal the PIN, and instructional information may be provided with  
3 instructions describing to the purchaser how to notice evidence of tampering with the PIN or  
4 any data under the label.

5 **[2070]** The package of the present invention may be of various sizes and shapes, and  
6 may, if desired, have a well-known hanger-hole aperture, generally, **36**, allowing the package  
7 to be hung from a product display hook in the retail environment prior to sale. Alternatively,  
8 the package may be placed in display containers or on racks in the retail environment. If  
9 desired, some or all of the surface of the package may be used for providing graphics for  
10 advertising or product information, in a manner well-known to those skilled in the art. The  
11 fact that the package of the present invention allows unactivated product to be openly  
12 presented and displayed in the retail environment due to the POS activation of the product  
13 permits POS graphics that present and describe the product to a prospective consumer so as  
14 to encourage sale of the product, in contrast to prior art pre-activated products that  
15 necessarily had to be hidden or locked securely away at retail outlets to discourage theft.  
16 Accordingly, the package of the present invention becomes a communication billboard that  
17 presents graphic, visual, and informational text to the consumer, and may communicate  
18 product features, benefits, and loyalty-branded coupons to the marketplace.

19 **[2080]** In some preferred embodiments of the method of the present invention, the  
20 activation code is transmitted over a first communications channel **38** from the POS to  
21 computer data storage apparatus **34**. Upon receipt of the activation code by the computer  
22 data storage apparatus **34**, it then, by the stored association within computer data storage  
23 apparatus **34** between the activation code and the PIN, records that the PIN for the purchased  
24 product has been activated and may then be used to register the purchased product. In other  
25 preferred embodiments of the present invention, such as, for example, an embodiment having  
26 a kiosk at the POS, the PINs may supplied over the first communications channel **38** by the  
27 computer data storage apparatus **34** to the kiosk at the time of product purchase and then

1 placed on the package by the kiosk at the time of vending the package at purchase, in a  
2 manner hereinafter described, and the computer data storage apparatus would record that the  
3 supplied PIN has been activated and may be used for subsequent registration of the  
4 purchased product.

5 **[2090]** It should be understood that computer data storage apparatus **34** may be of a well-  
6 known distributed processing computer architecture and need not be completely located at a  
7 single centralized location. For example, the POS activation and communication over the  
8 first communications channel **38** may be to a well-known specialized “front end” processor  
9 **40**, which may be considered a portion of a distributed computer data storage apparatus **34**,  
10 such that front-end processor **40** communicates using specialized protocols with the  
11 particular POS activation device, such as well-known magnetic strip reader **22**, well-known  
12 optical scanner **24**, well-known ICC interface apparatus **28**, kiosk computer **42**, etc. In turn,  
13 the receipt of the activation code by computer data storage apparatus **34** may cause recording  
14 at another physical site of the fact that the supplied PIN has been activated and may be used  
15 for subsequent registration of the product. By such a distributed architecture for computer  
16 data storage apparatus **34**, communication with the POS may occur from one physical  
17 location while subsequent registration of the product may occur by communication with a  
18 different physical location, e.g., with a registration or authorization verification entity such as  
19 the product’s manufacturer, to whom information has been provided that the product has  
20 been purchased and may be registered. Once the product has been activated, the product may  
21 be consumed as by downloading or delivering information, software files, programs,  
22 unlocking codes, etc., so that the purchased product may be used, and the providing of  
23 downloaded product may be over still another communications channel from perhaps still  
24 another physical location.

25 **[2100]** Subsequent to POS activation, the purchased product is registered over a second  
26 communications channel **44**, during which registration step the now-activated PIN is supplied  
27 to computer data storage apparatus **34**, perhaps also with other related registration

1 information, and the computer data storage apparatus 34 will then, after verifying that the  
2 PIN has been activated and may be used to register the product, enable use of, or delivery of,  
3 all or a portion of the purchased product. Optionally, the user may receive an “unlocking  
4 code,” etc., from the computer data storage apparatus 34 for subsequent use at the time the  
5 product is accessed or used, thereby permitting use of the product or service, and, for some  
6 types of products/services, such as, for example, computer software products, updates or  
7 revisions, or perhaps even the entire product, are then downloaded over the communications  
8 channel 44 (or perhaps even a different communications channel than the one used for  
9 registration). In some embodiments of the present invention, the registration and optional  
10 receipt of an unlocking code, as well as the optional downloading over the communications  
11 channel of updates or part or all of the product, may be automated, occurring at the first use  
12 of the product’s computer data storage media without explicit request by the user.

13 [2110] In a distributed architecture for computer data storage apparatus 34, registration  
14 communication over the second communications channel 44 may be to a well-known  
15 specialized “front end” processor 48, which may be considered a portion of a distributed  
16 computer data storage apparatus 34, such that front-end processor 48 communicates using  
17 specialized protocols with a user’s computer 50, and processor 48 may perform validation  
18 and registration itself as a distributed portion of computer data storage apparatus 34, or may  
19 communicate with another distributed portion of computer data storage apparatus 34 that  
20 may do the validation and registration.

21 [2120] Various implementations of communications channels 38, 44 are well-known to  
22 those skilled in the art, and their detailed implementation is unnecessary for an understanding  
23 of the present invention. If desired, communications channel interface devices 46, such as  
24 well-known “modems” or the like, may be used to modulate and demodulate data onto the  
25 communications channels.

26 [2130] As shown in Fig. 54, computer data storage apparatus 34 may be interfaced to  
27 second communications channel 44 using well-known audio recognition means 52 for

1 recognizing a PIN transmitted using an audio signal over communications channel 44 by the  
2 user, and the step of product registration for these embodiments of the method of the present  
3 invention includes the steps of providing a well-known telephone 54, establishing a  
4 telephonic connection between telephone 54 and audio recognition means 52 over  
5 communications channel 44, and transmitting the PIN to the audio recognition means 52  
6 using the telephone 54. For example, audio recognition means 52 may be a well-known  
7 telephonic dialing tones recognizer for recognizing the audio dialing tones emitted by well-  
8 known audio tone generation means 56 of a well-known tone-dialing telephone 54, and the  
9 step of transmitting the PIN over communications channel 44 would include the steps of  
10 causing the audio tone generation means 56 of telephone 54 to generate a sequence of  
11 telephonic dialing tones that represent the alphanumeric PIN, and recognition of that  
12 sequence of telephonic dialing tones by the telephonic dialing tones recognizer 52, which  
13 would then pass the PIN data on to computer data storage apparatus 34 for verification and  
14 registration. Alternatively, audio recognition means 52 may be a well-known integrated  
15 voice recognition ("IVR") apparatus that can recognize a vocabulary of spoken words, and  
16 the step of transmitting the PIN over the communications channel 44 would include the steps  
17 of causing the PIN to be spoken into the handset 58 of telephone 54, followed by recognition  
18 of the spoken PIN by the IVR 52. It is well-known for such IVR apparatus to include  
19 prerecorded messages or computer speech generation means so that messages and  
20 instructions may be provided to the caller. As another alternative, the telephone connection  
21 may be made to a "call center" with human customer service representatives, who would  
22 audibly receive a spoken PIN from the user and manually perform the registration step,  
23 perhaps supplying a spoken unlocking code for the product to the user.

24 [2140] In order to establish the telephone connection to the audio recognition means 52 at  
25 product registration, the package 20 of the present invention will preferably include a  
26 telephone number 59 printed thereon or within included materials in the package, in a manner  
27 hereinafter described.

1 [2150] Alternatively, rather than having the user establish a voice telephone connection  
2 during product registration, and as shown, for example the package 20 may include a well-  
3 known so-called "web address" or internet "URL" (Uniform Resource Locator) 60, a human-  
4 readable name used to locate a file or machine on the internet, optionally specifying the  
5 protocol (e.g., http, ftp), the machine, an optional path on the machine, and an optional (but  
6 rarely used) protocol port number, such as, for example, the URL of "www.riverborne.com".  
7 The user, at registration, would simply run any of the well-known internet browsing  
8 communications programs (so-called internet "browsers") on his or her computer 50, provide  
9 the URL 60 to the communications program, and have the communications program establish  
10 a connection over the internet to the computer data storage apparatus 34. Registration would  
11 then proceed using the browser and having the user provide registration information over the  
12 internet to the computer data storage apparatus 34. If desired, auxiliary registration data,  
13 such as a user's telephone number, name, postal address, Social Security number, email  
14 address, a user-selected password, etc., may be provided during registration, and the  
15 computer data storage apparatus 34 may record this auxiliary registration data and associate it  
16 with the PIN provided at registration, thereby permitting the provided user's telephone  
17 number or email address or password, etc., to be used instead of the PIN to access the  
18 purchased product subsequent to registration, or thereby permitting postal mailings or  
19 electronic mailings to be made to the now-registered user, etc., or to permit the user to accrue  
20 "loyalty points" or to obtain additional value incentives.

21 [2160] Still alternatively, the PIN may be machine readable as by a computer interface,  
22 and a PIN-reading apparatus may be provided and attached to the user's computer 50 so that  
23 the user is not required, or perhaps even permitted, to manually enter the PIN during  
24 registration of the product, and the PIN may be read under computer program control by the  
25 provided PIN-reading apparatus and transmitted to the computer data storage apparatus 34  
26 over the second communications channel 44. For example, some embodiments of the  
27 package have a data-encoded strip for the PIN with the PIN being encoded into the data-

1 encoded strip, and the PIN is read from this data-encoded strip by an appropriate and well-  
2 known data-encoded strip reader such as, for example, a well-known magnetic strip reader  
3 **22**, or a well-known optical scanner **24** that can read optical characters, bar codes, machine-  
4 readable optical recording media, etc., depending on the particular variant of data-encoded  
5 strip. The PIN-reading apparatus may be of similar or identical construction as the activation  
6 code reader used at POS. Alternatively, the PIN may be encoded onto computer data storage  
7 media, generally, **62**, for reading by an appropriate computer data storage media reader **64**, or  
8 the PIN may be encoded within an ICC element **26** within the purchased package and  
9 readable only using a well-known ICC interface apparatus **28**. It shall be understood that the  
10 term "computer data storage media", as used herein, shall be interpreted to mean any of the  
11 many and various media on which computers may store and/or retrieve data, such as, for  
12 example, read-only memory ("ROM"), random-access memory ("RAM"), compact disc  
13 ("CD") ROMs, magnetic or optical computer data storage media, computer disk drives,  
14 "floppy" disks, removable storage media, cassette tapes, etc.

15 **[2170]** It should be understood that multiple technologies may be simultaneously used to  
16 encode either or both of the activation code and PIN, so as to permit, for example, a POS  
17 with one technology but not another of an activation code reader to activate the package,  
18 without having to co-ordinate particular embodiments of the present invention with the  
19 particular (or unknown) technology at a given retail environment, or to allow the same  
20 package to be sold to a variety of customers, some having home computers and others  
21 lacking home computers, etc.

22 **[2180]** If an embodiment of the present invention is used whereby the user's computer  
23 can read information from the purchased package **20** or from a portion of the package and/or  
24 from contents within the package, then the registration process can be automated. For  
25 example, an "autostart" CD-ROM, or other computer-readable media or an ICC element, etc.,  
26 having the URL and/or PIN encoded therein, could, under computer program control, initiate  
27 direct contact with computer data storage apparatus **34** at the internet address given in the

1 URL, and provide the necessary registration information such as one or more PINs, activate  
2 the product's PIN or PINs, receive partial or full updated versions of the product, and/or  
3 receive one or more unlocking codes from computer data storage apparatus **34**, all with or  
4 without any interaction from the user. If desired, the user could be prompted to provide  
5 additional auxiliary registration information, as heretofore discussed. Additionally, the  
6 registration process could provide the computer data storage apparatus **34** with information  
7 unique to the user's computer, such as, for example, the network hardware interface address  
8 ("MAC address"), etc., so as to restrict transfer of the registered product to another computer,  
9 or to provide information to be used during future customer service and/or technical support  
10 requests, as well as to limit or meter the future use of the product.

11 **[2190]** If an embodiment of the invention is chosen that has an ICC element **26**, then  
12 such an ICC card may then be used, in a manner well-known to those skilled in the art, to  
13 validate authentication of the card holder during subsequent product utilization, software  
14 download, activation code retrieval, etc. Such an authenticated ICC card could also be used  
15 for providing an access key to pay-per-use entertainment programming, entertainment  
16 services, virtual reality software games, educational material or instructional classes, and any  
17 other electronically-delivered product requiring a fee or license or pre-purchase. Other types  
18 of products that could be used or accessed by such an authentication ICC card are special  
19 entertainment or sporting events, entertainment products, streaming video or audio, music or  
20 concerts, or any products available through a computer with use of a valid ICC card and an  
21 appropriate ICC card reader, with the ICC element being activated by the present invention at  
22 POS or during registration.

23 **[2200]** Referring to the drawing figures, the various embodiments of the packaging of the  
24 present invention will now be described in detail. Identifying reference designators for all  
25 preferred embodiments of the packaging are marked similarly except using prefix designators  
26 of "1.", "2.", etc., for the respective first, second, etc., preferred embodiments.

27 **[2210]** Figs. 1-10 show a first preferred embodiment **1.20** of the package of the present

invention. Package **1.20** has first and second panels **1.66** and **1.68** preferably constructed from a single piece of well-known one or two ply paper or plastic material and being optionally hingeably joined along a hinge line **1.70**, and after folding the panels together, they are preferably secured in place to each other by well-known heat-activated PVC coating or other pressure-sensitive hot-melt adhesive on the panels, and certain areas of the panels may be masked out with no PVC coating thereon applied, in a manner well-known to those skilled in the art.

**[2220]** Computer data storage media **1.62**, such as a well-known CD-ROM, is retained within package **1.20** by a transparent plastic blister window **1.72** that is received within a product display aperture **1.74**, with blister window **1.72** being sandwichingly retained between the panels by a peripheral flange **1.76** around blister window **1.72**. As the package **1.20** is sealed, preferably using a PVC-based heat-activated adhesive as hereinafter described, the blister flange **1.76** will be sandwichingly sealed to the panels of the package. Alternatively, blister window **1.72** may be joined to a panel of the package using a radio-frequency sealer to bond the blister flange **1.76** to the surface of the package.

**[2230]** Package **1.20** includes an activation card **1.78**, as may be seen in greater detail in Figs. 11-13, secured to package **1.20** preferably by a high shear strength, low peel strength adhesive such as PVC-based heat-activated adhesive applied to a portion of or all of the inside surfaces of the panels of the package **1.20**. An example of such a construction is taught by Hansen, U.S. Patent No. 5,791,474 (issued August 11, 1998), hereby fully included herein by reference. Activation card **1.78** has a magnetic data-encoded strip **1.80**, well-known to those skilled in the art and readily readable by a well-known magnetic strip reader **22**, onto which the activation code has been encoded, as herein described. Activation card **1.78** may have a PIN **1.32** thereon obscured by a removable opaque covering such as a well-known peel-off opaque label **1.82** (shown being removed in Fig. 13) or a well-known scratch-off opaque covering **1.82'** (shown being removed in Fig. 12). Activation card **1.78** may have a URL **1.60** thereon, directing the user to an internet address at which the product



1 may be registered, and also may have a telephone number **1.59** thereon, directing the user to  
2 a telephone connection at which the product may be registered by speaking the PIN **1.32** into  
3 a telephone or by entering a sequence of telephone dialing tones, as herein described in the  
4 present invention's preferred embodiments of the steps of registration. The activation card  
5 **1.78** may also have a machine-readable optical data-encoded activation strip **1.80'**, and one of  
6 the panels of the package **1.20** may have the PIN **1.32** printed thereon and hidden by the  
7 sandwiched assembly of the panels. Preferably, activation card **1.78** has a portion thereof  
8 extending outside the perimeter of at least one of the panels of the package **1.20** as seen best  
9 in Fig. 5 so that the magnetic data-encoded activation strip **1.80** and/or the optical data-  
10 encoded activation strip **1.80** may be read at the POS without having to remove the activation  
11 card **1.78** from the package **1.20** during POS activation. If desired, activation card **1.78** may  
12 have a well-known ICC element **1.26** embedded therein, into which the PIN and/or activation  
13 code may be stored, as heretofore described. Figs. 65-67 show a fourteenth embodiment  
14 **14.20** of the present invention, similar to the first embodiment **1.20**, except that a protective  
15 flap **14.84** extends over the activation strip **14.80** of the activation card **14.78** of the  
16 fourteenth embodiment prior to activation, and the protective flap **14.84** is folded or bent  
17 along a fold, cut score or perforation **14.86** prior to activation so as to expose the activation  
18 strip **14.80**.

19 **[2240]** Returning to the first embodiment **1.20**, a transparent protective Mylar plastic or  
20 film window **1.90** may be provided for covering a cutout **1.92** in one of the panels of package  
21 **1.20**, so that graphics and text on activation card **1.78** may be seen through transparent  
22 window **1.90** after assembly has been completed of package **1.20**, with transparent window  
23 **1.90** being preferably adhered to the package **1.20** during its sandwiched construction  
24 because the dimensions of transparent window **1.90** are greater than those of cutout **1.92**.

25 **[2250]** Preferably, one of the panels of package **1.20** may have a plurality of perforated  
26 scores or cut lines **1.94** along an edge over the activation card **1.78** so as to permit easier  
27 release of activation card **1.78** from the rest of package **1.20** after purchase, and also to

1 provide tamper evidence of an attempt to view the PIN **1.32** on activation card **1.78** prior to  
2 purchase. Alternatively or additionally, package **1.20** may have an optically-readable bar  
3 code or alphanumeric code or optical data-encoded strip **1.96** that may be used for encoding  
4 the PIN, the activation code, or product serialization information onto the package. If  
5 desired, the URL **1.60** for connection to the registration computer may also, or alternatively,  
6 be printed on one or both of the panels of package **1.20**. If desired, package **1.20** may have a  
7 well-known hanger-hole aperture **1.36** allowing the package to be hung from a product  
8 display hook in the retail environment prior to sale.

9 **[2260]** Figs. 14-22 show a second embodiment **2.20** of the packaging of the present  
10 invention, similar to the first embodiment **1.20** except that the computer data storage media  
11 **2.62** is a well-known "floppy disk" having magnetic data storage media rather than the  
12 optical data storage media of the first embodiment. Floppy disk **2.62** may be placed together  
13 with an instructional book **2.98** within a product box **2.100**, and box **2.100** is then retained  
14 within package **2.20** by a transparent window **2.72** that is received within a product display  
15 aperture **2.74** within one of the panels of package **2.20**. Various items may be placed within  
16 box **2.100** such as, for example, printed collateral materials such as a map, an audio or data  
17 CD-ROM, greeting cards, game-related toys, and/or coupons. If desired, the box **2.100** may  
18 have one or more apertures therethrough to allow scanning of serialized product codes,  
19 activation codes, etc. As with the first embodiment, an activation card **2.78** has a magnetic  
20 data-encoded strip **2.80** or an optical data-encoded strip **2.80'** exposed and extending beyond  
21 the perimeter of one of the panels of package **2.20**, and activation card **2.78** may include an  
22 ICC element **2.26**.

23 **[2270]** Figs. 23-27 show a third embodiment **3.20** of the packaging of the present  
24 invention. The substantial difference between the first and third embodiments is that, with  
25 the third embodiment, a product serialization code **3.102** shows through a product  
26 serialization aperture **3.104** in a panel of the package **3.20** such that the product serialization  
27 code **3.102** may be viewed after the product is assembled. As hereinafter explained, such a

1 structural feature can enable the finished package to be scanned during manufacture as a  
2 quality control step, either to verify that the correct serialized product has been matched with  
3 a given activation code, or else, and preferably, for the manufacturing process to scan both  
4 the activation code and the product serialization code and make an association between the  
5 two so that this association between the two may be passed to the computer data storage  
6 apparatus 34 for use at the time of product registration, and also for preparing quality control  
7 and inventory tracking reports. As with other embodiments, an activation card 3.78 may  
8 have an ICC element 3.26, if desired. Alternatively, or additionally, a product serialization  
9 code 3.102' may show through the transparent blister window 3.72 as seen in Fig. 27, or, if  
10 an opaque and non-transparent blister window 3.72 is used, an aperture (not shown) may be  
11 provided through the retaining blister 3.72 for viewing the product serialization code 3.102'.

12 [2280] A fourth embodiment 4.20 of the packaging of the present invention is shown in  
13 Figs. 28-32. The fourth embodiment is similar to the first embodiment except that, in the  
14 fourth embodiment 4.20, the activation card 4.78 is contained within the perimeter of the  
15 panels of the package 4.20 rather than having a portion of the activation card extend outside  
16 that perimeter, and an activation code 4.80' on the activation card 4.78 shows through an  
17 activation code aperture 4.106 in one of the panels of the package 4.20. As with other  
18 embodiments, the activation card 4.78 may have an ICC element 4.26 embedded therein, and  
19 activation card 4.78 may have a URL 4.60 and may have a PIN 4.32 that may be obscured by  
20 an opaque covering such as scratch-off opaque covering 4.82'.

21 [2290] As with all embodiments, the choice of adhesive used to seal the panels of the  
22 package together and/or to secure the various components of the package (panels, computer  
23 media, activation card, instructional booklets, etc.) together will be determined by the residue  
24 remaining on, or any damage to, any components of the package, as well as the holding  
25 strength of the adhesive, in a manner well-known to those skilled in the art. A preferred  
26 adhesive, for effective adhesion, efficient application, and adequate shear strength is well-  
27 known pressure-sensitive hot-melt adhesive, readily available in the market and having little

1 residual effect on components of and within the package. Likewise, single or double-sided  
2 tape may be used to attach components to the package, and the kind of tape, and/or the  
3 adhesive on the tape, can similarly be determined by the residue remaining on or damage to  
4 any component after being removed from the package of the invention. Included in the  
5 design choice of tape and its type are the application properties of the particular tape and its  
6 associated costs. Tape may overlay and extend beyond the perimeter of an assembled  
7 component and adhere to any required portion of the package. A pressure-sensitive label  
8 with a heat-activated PVC coating may be used to attach the activation card, or any other  
9 component of the packaging or of the product, to the package, and such a pressure-sensitive  
10 label may extend beyond the perimeter of the activation card or component, if desired.

11 **[2300]** A fifth preferred embodiment **5.20** of the packaging is shown in Figs. 33-34.  
12 Different from the first embodiment, the fifth embodiment uses a package **5.20** preferably of  
13 a one-piece construction, preferably a plastic package, and the activation card **5.78** is secured  
14 to the panel **5.66** of the package by perforations **5.108**. Like other embodiments, activation  
15 card **5.78** may have an ICC element **5.26** embedded therewithin, and package **5.20** may have  
16 a magnetic activation strip **5.80** and one or more obscured PINs that are obscured by an  
17 opaque covering **5.82**.

18 **[2310]** A sixth embodiment **6.20** is shown in Figs. 35 and 46, and the rear of a seventh  
19 embodiment **7.20** is shown in Fig. 47, it being understood that the front of the seventh  
20 embodiment **7.20** is substantially the same as the front of sixth embodiment **6.20** as shown in  
21 Fig. 35. The substantial difference between the fifth embodiment **5.20** and the sixth  
22 embodiment **6.20** is that, with the sixth embodiment, the activation card **6.78** is wholly within  
23 the perimeter of the panel **6.66** of the package **6.20**, and perforations **6.108** allow removal of  
24 the activation card from the package. Activation card **6.78** has a plurality of PINs thereon  
25 that are obscured by an opaque covering **6.82**, and activation card **7.78** likewise has a  
26 plurality of PINs thereon obscured by an opaque covering **7.82**. The substantial difference  
27 between the sixth and seventh embodiments is that the sixth embodiment shows an optical

1 data-encoded activation strip **6.80'** on the panel of the package outside the perimeter of the  
2 activation card **6.78**, whereas the seventh embodiment shows a magnetic data-encoded  
3 activation strip **7.80** on the panel of the package outside the perimeter of the activation card  
4 **7.78**.

5 **[2320]** An eighth embodiment **8.20** is shown in Figs. 36-44, with similarities to the third  
6 and fourth embodiments. The activation card **8.78** is similar to the activation card **4.78**  
7 except, in order to show different possibilities for the activation card, activation card **8.78**  
8 shows different placement of the URL **8.60** and the PIN **8.32** is obscured by a peel-off  
9 opaque covering **8.82**. Transparent window **8.72** and computer media **8.62** are substantially  
10 similar to transparent window **3.72** and computer media **3.62**. Like the fourth embodiment,  
11 activation code **8.80'** shows through an activation code aperture **8.106** and, like the third  
12 embodiment, a product serialization code **8.102** shows through a product serialization  
13 aperture **8.104** and a product serialization code **8.102'** may also show through the transparent  
14 window **8.72**.

15 **[2330]** Figs. 45, 74, and 75 show similar ninth, tenth, and eleventh embodiments **9.20**,  
16 **10.20**, and **11.20**. In all of these embodiments, an instructional booklet **9.98**, **10.98**, and  
17 **11.98**, respectively, may be within the box **9.100**, **10.100**, and **11.100**, respectively, and all  
18 may contain computer data storage media **9.62**, **10.62**, and **11.62**, respectively. In  
19 embodiment **9.20**, instructional booklet **9.98** serves a similar purpose as the activation card of  
20 other prior embodiments, and box **9.100** and/or instructional booklet **9.98** may have a URL  
21 **9.60** for use in performing registration of the product. In embodiment **9.20**, a PIN **9.32** is  
22 included within the package as on instructional booklet **9.98**, for example, and, because it is  
23 sealed within the package, there is no need for obscuring of the PIN, although such an  
24 obscuring covering may be provided, if desired. Additionally, the embodiment of package  
25 **9.20** has an activation code **9.80'** visible on the outside of the package, either by having the  
26 activation code **9.80'** be printed on or affixed to the outside of box **9.100**, or preferably by  
27 having activation code **9.80'** be printed on or affixed to contents within the package and show

1 through an activation code aperture **9.106** in box **9.100**.

2 **[2340]** The tenth embodiment **10.20** of Fig. 74 is similar to the ninth embodiment except  
3 that a product serialization code **10.102** is exposed through a serialization code aperture  
4 **10.104** through box **10.100**, and has a label **140** of Fig. 50, hereinafter described, applied to  
5 the surface of the box **10.100**. The eleventh embodiment **11.20** of Fig. 75 is similar, except  
6 the contents within box **11.100** are unserialized, and a label **140** of Fig. 50, hereinafter  
7 described, is affixed to the outside of the box **11.100** so as to provide both the activation code  
8 and the PIN on the label **140** after sealing the box **11.100** during manufacturing.

9 **[2350]** Figs. 48, 49, 50, 51, and 51A show first embodiment **140** of a label of the present  
10 invention that facilitates applying the PIN and activation code to a package. The label **140**  
11 has a well-known pressure-sensitive adhesive **142** on the rear surface of its substrate **144**, and  
12 may be applied to a package surface **146** from a roll of labels using a well-known so-called  
13 “blow-on” label applicator such as a pneumatic label applicator, followed by pressure being  
14 applied to the label, after placement on the package surface **146**, using a well-known label  
15 tamping device so as to cause the label to be securely adhered to the package surface **146**. A  
16 PIN **32** is printed on top of the label’s substrate **144**, and an obscuring removable opaque  
17 covering, such as scratch-off covering **82'**, is applied over the PIN **32** to the substrate so as to  
18 obscure the PIN **32**. Fig. 50 shows the completed label with obscuring covering **82'** over the  
19 PIN, and shows an activation code **80'** on the label as well. If desired, other serialization or  
20 product code information **148** may be printed on the label as well. By using such a label to  
21 practice the present invention, the activation code(s) and PIN(s) may be applied to the  
22 package in a single step from a roll of labels using a label applicator, with the correspondence  
23 between the PINs and the activation codes having been established during the manufacture of  
24 the labels rather than after placement of activation codes and PINs with the packaging,  
25 thereby enabling manufacture of the product to be separated from the activation code and  
26 PIN correspondence and tracking.

27 **[2360]** Fig. 50A shows a variant **140'** of the label **140** in which the activation code **80'** is

1 printed on top of the obscuring removable opaque covering **82'**. Fig. 52 shows a variant  
2 **140''** of the label **140** in which a plurality of PINs are obscured by a plurality of obscuring  
3 opaque coverings. The structure of label **140''** is otherwise substantially the same as label  
4 **140**, and it shall be understood that the activation codes of Fig. 52 may be overprinted on the  
5 plurality of obscuring opaque coverings as well. The label **140'''** of Fig. 51B is similar to  
6 that of Fig. 51A, except that a peel-off removable opaque covering **82**, having a releasable  
7 adhesive **150** affixing covering **82** to substrate **144**, is used rather than a scratch-off covering,  
8 and it shall be understood that the activation code may be overprinted onto covering **82** as  
9 well.

10 [2370] It shall be understood that any of the package embodiments of the present  
11 invention, not only the box of Fig. 75, could preferably use the labels **140**, **140'**, **140''**, **140'''**  
12 of the present invention, or could instead have the activation code and/or PIN printed on the  
13 package or a component of the package. Use of the labels of the present invention separates  
14 manufacture of the product package from the activation code.

15 [2380] Figs. 55-61 show a twelfth embodiment **12.20** of the present invention, and Figs.  
16 62-64 show a similar thirteenth embodiment of the present invention, it being understood that  
17 the substantial difference between the twelfth and thirteenth embodiments is the structure of  
18 the placement of the activation cards **12.78** and **13.78** on the package. Twelfth embodiment  
19 **12.20** uses an activation card **12.78** that is substantially similar to activation card **1.78** of the  
20 first embodiment, and that description need not be repeated here, and a transparent window  
21 **12.90** may be used to show a portion of activation card **12.78** therethrough. Thirteenth  
22 embodiment **13.20** uses an activation card **13.78** that is similar to the activation card **4.78** of  
23 the fourth embodiment **4.20**, and that description need not be repeated here. Otherwise, the  
24 twelfth and thirteenth embodiments of the present invention are substantially the same, and a  
25 description of the twelfth embodiment will suffice for both.

26 [2390] Package **12.20** holds a plurality of product registration cards **112**, each having a  
27 product registration code **114** thereon. The product registration cards **112** are retained within

1 a blister window **12.72**, similar to the blister windows of other embodiments, and a  
2 serialization code **116** for one of the product registration cards **112** shows through a product  
3 serialization aperture **118** in the package. As with the PINs of other embodiments, the  
4 product registration code **82** for each registration card **112** may be obscured by obscuring  
5 removable opaque coverings **82**. During manufacture, all serialization codes **116** for all  
6 registration cards **112** in a given blister pack **12.20** are recorded and associated as a group,  
7 and the registration codes for the group are also associated with the PIN for the package  
8 **12.20**, which, in turn, is associated with the activation code for that package. The association  
9 between each product registration card's product registration code and its serialization code  
10 is made at the time of manufacture of each product registration card **112**, which has both  
11 codes printed thereon. This association between the serialization codes and the package's  
12 PIN and activation code is made by reading the serialization code **116** through the aperture  
13 **118** during manufacture, and, with knowledge of the grouping of the serialization codes and  
14 their registration codes, the product registration codes for a particular package's PIN and  
15 activation code become known. At registration, the step of registering the product by  
16 transmitting the PIN over the second communications channel **44** to the computer data  
17 storage apparatus **34** causes the computer data storage apparatus **34** to record that the PIN has  
18 been registered and that each of the associated product registration codes may then be  
19 accepted. Thereafter, for each product registration card **112**, the product registration code  
20 **114** for that product registration card may be transmitted over a third communication channel  
21 to the computer data storage apparatus, at which time the computer data storage apparatus  
22 will verify that this product registration code may be accepted because the associated PIN for  
23 the package has been previously registered, and the product registration code is then  
24 accepted. It shall be understood that the apparatus and procedures used for registering PINs,  
25 heretofore described, are equally applicable for registering product registration codes. It shall  
26 also be understood that all product registration cards **112** within a given package may have  
27 the same serialization code **116** because knowledge of one serialization code **116** through



1 aperture **118** is sufficient to identify all product registration codes **82** within the package. It  
2 will thus also be understood that, when the package **12.20** is purchased and its associated PIN  
3 activated as with other embodiments of the present invention, all product registration cards  
4 **112** in that "multi-pack" package become capable of then having their product registration  
5 codes accepted.

6 **[2400]** The product registration cards **112** preferably have a graphic **120** of a famous  
7 athlete or entertainer, and also have a URL **60'** and/or telephone number **59'** at which the  
8 product registration codes may be accepted. A purchaser may thus purchase a pack of sports-  
9 branded cards or entertainer-branded cards and be directed to the internet web site for that  
10 entertainer or sports figure. Likewise, one or more of the product registration cards could be  
11 given to friends of the purchaser, and, at the time of transmitting the product registration code  
12 to the web site, the friend could then enter the telephone number, or email address, etc., of  
13 the purchaser who referred the friend to the web site, and the original purchaser could then  
14 receive "bonus points" for use of extra products, thereby encouraging purchasers to give  
15 product registration cards to their friends, thereby increasing the "word of mouth" marketing  
16 for given entertainers and sports figures, etc. It should be understood that all product  
17 registration cards within a given blister package do not need to be the same, and could be for  
18 different entertainers (e.g., a "jazz collection" or a "rock music collection") or could be  
19 collector's cards for sports figures. The "product" consumed by use of such cards could be,  
20 for example, download of audio music (so-called "MP3" files) or attendance at sporting  
21 events, etc.

22 **[2410]** Fig. 70 shows a fifteenth embodiment **15.20** of the present invention, similar to  
23 the third embodiment, except that the package may be folded into a gift box. An activation  
24 card **15.78** hangs off a portion of the package for activation in the usual manner, and an  
25 aperture **15.104** in the box may show a product serialization code therethrough. After  
26 activation, the activation card **15.78** may be removed from the package and inserted inside  
27 the gift box, as shown in Fig. 73, for wrapping of the box as a present. As is well-known to

those in the art, the package may include various flaps **154** to which glue may be applied so as to hold the gift box in its desired three-dimensional form.

**[2420]** Fig. 76 shows a step in the manufacturing process whereby one or more scanners **24** may read the product serialization codes **116** and activation codes from a data-encoded strip **80** or **80'** using an appropriate data-encoded strip reader (**22, 24**), pass this information on to the computer data storage apparatus **34**, where an association may be recorded between the product serialization code and/or PIN and/or activation code, for use at subsequent registration, in a manner hereinbefore described.

**[2430]** Figs. 68 and 69 show an embodiment of the present invention in which a kiosk **130** is provided at the POS for vending the product package. Kiosk **130** may have a well-known computer "touch-screen" display **132** and may have a well-known payment acceptor **134** for receiving money such as currency and coins. Kiosk **130** may have a computer **42** that controls operation of the kiosk, and computer **42** may be interfaced to a PIN applicator such as a printer **136** for printing PINs **32** on the vended package **20** at time of sale, and kiosk **130** may be stocked with blank packages **20'** having no PINs yet applied. Computer **42** is preferably in communication with computer data storage apparatus **34** for interchanging activation information with apparatus **34**, or computer **42** may be "pre-loaded" with a set of PINs that may be vended, with apparatus **34** likewise having that set of PINs that, once vended, may be subsequently registered. In either of these kiosk embodiments, whether pre-loaded with a set of PINs, or whether in communication with apparatus **34**, the kiosk **130** performs a final manufacturing step for the packages **20**, namely, affixing a PIN to the package as it is vended.

**[2440]** If the kiosk is in communication with apparatus **34** as over a communication channel **38**, then the kiosk may, at each sale event, notify apparatus of the sale event and receive a PIN from the apparatus **34** for printing on the package **20** being vended, and apparatus **34** may then allow registration of the then-vended PIN. Alternatively, kiosk **130** could supply the particular PIN being vended to the apparatus **34** from a pre-loaded set of

1 PINs, notify the apparatus **34** that the PIN was being vended, and apparatus **34** could then  
2 enable subsequent registration of the then-vended PIN. It should be noted that none of the  
3 kiosk embodiments require an activation code to be on the vended package because the kiosk  
4 controls the vending and activation step. If the apparatus **34** supplies the PIN to the kiosk  
5 over communications channel **38**, then pseudo-random PINs or sequential PINs could be  
6 provided to the kiosk, as desired, using algorithmic generation of the PINs.

7 **[2450]** In its simplest form, kiosk **130** could print and vend a ticket **138** with a PIN **32** on  
8 it, and the PIN of such an embodiment might be used for purchase of movie rentals over  
9 "pay per view" entertainment channels or for downloading of audio entertainment material.

10 It should be noted that the download channel could also be different from the registration  
11 communications channel, such that the PIN may be voice registered as hereinbefore  
12 described and then a movie may be viewed on a on pay-per-view cable TV channel, or a PIN  
13 may be voice registered followed by download of audio entertainment material over the  
14 internet.

15 **[2460]** Although the present invention has been described and illustrated with respect to  
16 preferred embodiments and preferred uses therefor, it is not to be so limited since  
17 modifications and changes can be made therein which are within the full intended scope of  
18 the invention.